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Homeland Security

United States  
Coast Guard



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**DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY**

**U. S. COAST GUARD**

**STATEMENT OF**

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**ON**

**"HOW INFORMATION SHARING BETWEEN FEDERAL, STATE  
AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS ENHANCES EFFORTS TO BETTER  
SECURE OUR NATION'S PORTS"**

**BEFORE THE**

**COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM**

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT,  
FINANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

**U. S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**JULY 10, 2006**

## **Introduction**

Good morning Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Committee. It is a pleasure to be here today to discuss the Coast Guard's role and how information sharing between federal, state and local governments enhances our efforts to better secure U. S. ports, and specifically the port of New York/New Jersey.

## **Military, Multi-Mission, Multi-Agency Partner for Maritime Port Security**

The Coast Guard's "world of work" includes our oceans, seas, lakes, rivers, bays, sounds, harbors and waterways. Distinct from land borders characterized by clear legal boundaries, our ports represent commerce, trade and international supply chains which ebb and flow in a continuous stream of productivity from many different points all over the world. We live in an interconnected world. Nowhere is this fact more evident than in a port like New York. The port is fundamental to our nation's and the world's economic prosperity. As a result, the maritime safety and security of our ports are not just a concern of U.S. national interest and security, but of global stability. The port of New York is enormously complex and critical, with an unparalleled variety of users from large cruise ships to fishermen and recreational boaters. The profiles of maritime users and neighbors are as varied as the jagged coastlines surrounding our country and significantly impact the world's economy everyday. Within a short distance of the shipping lanes you can find Wall Street, landmarks of national significance, intermodal highways, international airports, and historic bridges and tunnels. It is due to the close proximity of these various modes of transportation that the Port of New York and New Jersey is the destination for eighty-five million metric tons of cargo annually, serving over eighty million people or 27% of the entire U.S. population.

While the nature of the Coast Guard's world of work is clear, the missions are ever changing with new threats emerging as others are mitigated. However, working with our maritime partners to combine our capabilities and competencies we have been able to adapt our responses and change accordingly. I can think of no other model of interagency cooperation which has adapted, overcome and persevered through the attack on our own soil on September 11, 2001 like the partnerships here in the port of the New York. Thanks to the dedication and hard work of the New York Police Department (NYPD), New York Fire Department (FDNY), New Jersey State Police and Fire Department, Federal Bureau of Investigations/Joint Terrorism Task Force (FBI/JTTF), Customs and Border Protection (CBP), Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS), Port Authority, and the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) we have increased security in our port and protected national treasures such as the Statue of Liberty and the United Nations.

As Captain of the Port New York and Commander of Coast Guard Sector New York I serve as the Federal Maritime Security Coordinator; the Officer in Charge, Marine Inspection; the Federal On-Scene Coordinator; and the Search and Rescue Mission Coordinator. Sector New York is the Coast Guard's largest East Coast field command responsible for activities from Sandy Hook, NJ, north through the Port of New/New Jersey, up the Hudson River to just south of Lake Champlain, and up the East River to the Long Island Sound/Connecticut border. The command integrates missions to focus on two major operational processes: **PREVENTION** and **RESPONSE**, in support of our service's five fundamental roles: **Maritime Safety, Maritime Security, Maritime Mobility, Protection of Natural Resources, and National Defense.**

## **Information Sharing and Partnerships**

Interagency information sharing has been critical to the effectiveness of response to threats or potential threats here in New York and New Jersey. Interagency fusion centers, security committees, and the daily routine of information exchange with partners have been implemented to mitigate and prevent threats while also being mindful of maritime safety. The following is just a brief overview of several partnerships that are in place locally:

- *Coast Guard Field Intelligence Support Team (FIST) New York:*

The FIST is a one stop, interagency maritime intelligence center located at Sector New York on Staten Island. Information is shared for both informational and operational purposes, to counter terrorism, narcotics trafficking, maritime smuggling, and illegal maritime migration. The FIST also develops a vessel intelligence matrix to help determine which vessels entering port should be boarded. Core membership includes active duty and reserve members from the U.S. Coast Guard working with ICE, ONI, CGIS, NYPD, and NCIS. The FIST also has CG and CGIS liaison officers at partner intelligence fusion centers including JTTF New York, JTTF Newark, NYPD Counter-Terrorism and the NYPD Regional Intelligence Center (RIC), where information can be easily disseminated.

Joint-agency vessel intelligence matrices are developed twice a week using information exchanged among FIST partners. Information for vessels of interest come from a variety of sources, including classified data bases and required advanced notice of arrival information for every incoming ship to the port of New York/New Jersey and Long Island. The information gathered facilitates the ‘board or no board’ decision by Coast Guard and other operational law enforcement partner agencies in the port. This matrix also serves to identify vessels for further intelligence collections. Many benefits have been derived from the FIST exchange, including coordination and de-confliction of intelligence based operations as well as tracking of investigations. A lead investigating agency on a case can now receive assistance and/or input from another agency, yet still maintain operational control over the case. Essentially, “fusion” centers are force-multipliers for all participants. The overall success of a partnership largely depends on the relations between individual representatives of each agency; in New York these relationships have been essential in ensuring that all affected parties are notified of a significant incident, even if the agency notified is not a participant in a “fusion” center.

- *Maritime Security Committees:*

As a result of the Maritime Transportation Security Act of 2002, the flow of information among stakeholders has been improved and enhanced. A big part of MTSA was the establishment of the Area Maritime Security Committee (AMSC). The AMSC advises, consults, reports and makes recommendations to the Federal Maritime Security Coordinator (FMSC) on matters relating to maritime security. The mission of the AMSC is to further the security operations for the Captain of the Port by assisting the FMSC in Maritime Homeland Security missions, coordination of planning and information sharing. This is done by charging stakeholders with the responsibility to observe, monitor and report questionable or inappropriate activity, and to develop an Area Maritime Security Plan - including awareness, prevention, and response and recovery capabilities for port partners.

AMSC meetings take place quarterly and have facilitated face to face meetings with representatives of a multitude of agencies, and have encouraged participation among AMSC member peers and contacts. Overall, AMSCs provide a forum which enables those new to the port to get “up to speed” on current and ongoing port security/intelligence matters, while

allowing founding members to continuously monitor projects, share intelligence/training, and make new contacts.

Also required under MTSA is the security exercise program. These annual local exercises help to assess the effectiveness of the Area Maritime Security Plans and the port community's preparedness to respond to security threats and incidents. The New York Area Maritime Security Committee's Port Recovery Working Group recently completed revisions to Section 6300 of the Area Maritime Security (AMS) Plan based on the lessons learned from the DHS Economic War-game held in February 2005. Our current plan is now being vetted against the guidance provided by DHS in the Maritime Infrastructure Recovery Plan, published in April 2006.

- *Harbor Operations Committee*

The Harbor Safety, Navigation, and Operations Committee provides a wealth of Maritime Domain Awareness information, in addition to improving both the mobility and safety of the Maritime Transportation System (MTS). Harbor Operations committee and subcommittee informational exchanges provide tremendous visibility from hundreds of public and private port stakeholders with whom we directly interact in a wide variety of activities, including:

- Annual coordination and scheduling of over 500 construction projects and over 375 regulated Marine Events;
- Development of expanded safety and security zone regulations;
- Refinement of Hurricane and Severe Weather Plan protocols; and
- Development of a "Port Coordination Team" to address pre and post incident procedures for both predicted and no-notice events that impact the MTS.

- *The State, Local, Private Sector Security Clearance Program.*

The majority of information received at the field level is unclassified. In some cases, however, it may be necessary to share classified information at the SECRET level. Accordingly, Coast Guard Headquarters has implemented a program (the State, Local, Industry Security Clearance Program) that allows for 7-10 members of each Area Maritime Security Committee across the nation to be recommended by the Federal Maritime Security Coordinator to receive a SECRET clearance. Members of command centers may also be processed for SECRET clearances. Several of these clearances have been completed to date, and the Coast Guard is committed to providing security clearances to these officials in a timely manner.

- *Standardizing protocols / Strengthening partnerships*

Much has been done to standardize protocols related to information sharing and thus improve port partnerships, security, and safety. For example:

- Nationally, established a National Maritime Security Advisory Committee in order to provide a strategic public-private forum on critical maritime security topics;

- Launched *America's Waterways Watch*, a citizen involvement program that leverages the Coast Guard's relationship with the maritime public by asking them to report suspicious activity and explaining what constitutes suspicious activity; and
- Deployed the *Homeport* information sharing web portal, which allows for collaboration and communication in a controlled security environment (for sensitive but unclassified material) among Area Maritime Security Committee members and port stakeholders at large. This system enables rapid distribution of:
  - sensitive threat warning products to vetted partners;
  - MARSEC level change notifications to the maritime community;
  - tracking of MARSEC attainment for vessels and facilities in the AOR; and
  - will soon host an advance notification system to issue immediate alerts via a number of communication channels to port users.

In the Port of New York/New Jersey, the AMSC has established numerous sub-committees to strengthen port protocols and exchange of information. These sub-committees include:

- The Communications Sub-committee, which implements new methods and technologies to improve contact with vessels, facilities, law enforcement personnel, committee members, maritime stakeholders and service providers, as well as the media.
- The Response and Recovery Sub-committee which is comprised of stakeholders within the maritime response community which are responsible for outlining the resources in the area available to respond to and investigate maritime security incidents. Likewise, this committee is responsible for developing strategies to aid the port in recovery from a maritime security incident.
- The Planning and Preparedness Sub-committee will reduce the port's risk to terrorism by planning and coordinating mitigation strategies to detect, prevent, and interdict transportation security incidents. The committee will also establish procedures and protocols for operating under different threat levels or security specific events.
- The Intelligence Sub-committee is composed of local, state and federal law enforcement agencies. This Sub-committee is responsible for maintaining current maritime threat assessments and improving the collection and dissemination of law enforcement and security information. This sub-committee will also establish and coordinate training to provide law enforcement knowledge regarding operating in a maritime environment.
- The Training and Exercises sub-committee's purpose is to assist the FMSC in conducting or participating in an exercise at least once each calendar year, with no more than 18 months between exercises. The purpose of the exercises is to test the effectiveness of the AMS Plan as described in 33 CFR 103.515 and create and maintain documentation on each exercise. This committee is also responsible for making both classroom and tactical training available to relevant stakeholders.
- The Grants and Legislative Activities Sub-committee is responsible for tracking federal and state legislation and regulations that may have implications on regional maritime security.

The committee is also responsible for identifying port wide projects that may be eligible for various grants and advising support to the COTP when appropriate.

These strengthened protocols have also facilitated maritime commerce and complement maritime safety. They have:

- kept shipping channels and harbors open to navigation during the New England winter shipping season; and
- ensured safe passages of commercial, high capacity passenger vessels and recreational vessels through congested harbors, with New York's Vessel Traffic Service (VTS). The VTS annually controls 360,000 vessel movements within the port and over 60 million passengers transiting on commuter ferries.

The Sector New York Vessel Inspections Division, which responds to over 500 pollution cases and 600 marine casualties each year, offers a great example of how the daily exchange of information with a port partner helps with vessel inspections and containerized cargo. This division shares its vessel, container and facility inspection schedule with the Customs and Border Protection (CBP). CBP's automated Manifest System helps identify and target hazardous materials in containers before their arrival in port, as well as monitoring the movement of 30 billion gallons of oil annually. The CBP, on a moment's notice, can help mitigate a particular concern about a container and provide VACIS, radiation detection, and ion scans.

The use of *Homeport* for exchange of information with partners has been helpful in sharing sensitive information to a large network of stakeholders. Our three-way notification system (notifying our partners via cell phone, office phone and email) is another good example of how we're using information and technology to break down barriers for quick relay of information in real time environments to reach people in multiple ways and places, even at home.

Additionally, Coast Guard watch standers have been provided to multiple Office of Emergency Management (OEM) centers, including during the December 2005 transit strike. During this event, information sharing between the Coast Guard, NYC DOT, and NYOEM was critical to the safety and efficiency of temporary passenger ferry operations and the modification of drawbridge operation.

### ***Improving the Nation's Maritime Domain Awareness***

Coast Guard assets and systems are required to operate across a diverse operating area, including within our ports, in the littoral region and far offshore. Thanks to the strong support of the Administration, Congress and this Committee, a number of initiatives are underway to transform Coast Guard capabilities. With regard to Maritime Domain Awareness we have made great strides, but we have much more to do.

### ***Partnerships***

We are establishing new partnerships to share information and better leverage resources. We are working with local port authorities and other entities to share information from cameras, radar and other sensors to capitalize on existing capability. Since December 2003, the Information Sharing Initiative

(ISI), as part of the Newark Division's Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) and recently its terrorism threats and leads squad (Squad CT-3), has been utilizing a heavily customized Excel spreadsheet to track lead information and investigative assignments. The ISI is responsible for the management of all threat and lead information that is generated within New Jersey.

This information is sourced and presented to the ISI in a wide array of formats to include, but not limited to, bureau-generated information; information from federal, state, county, and local law enforcement; and public correspondence. The ISI averages an intake of 6,000 leads per year.

The ISI tracking system has been provided to Field Intelligence Support Team (FIST) New York in order to facilitate and coordinate leads and threats concerning the port area. This allows for a seamless transfer of critical information between the ISI and FIST NY, enhancing understanding of the bi-state port environment as it pertains to joint counterterrorism efforts. This sharing of information promotes for a more substantive joint ISI / FIST NY briefing at AMSEC intelligence subcommittee meetings to agencies that have a vested interest in port security matters.

## **Conclusion**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, the Coast Guard continues to execute all of its missions, while continuing to improve maritime domain awareness. As Vice Admiral Cross reported to you in March of this year, the Coast Guard's response to Hurricane Katrina gave the nation a renewed appreciation of the value of having our Coast Guard ready and able to bring the full force of its military and multi-mission, maritime assets to bear at a moment's notice. Likewise, our Commandant, Admiral Allen has emphasized the interconnected nature of the safety, security and defense issues successfully being managed every day by our Coast Guard and DHS partners in the maritime environment.

Here in New York, Coast Guard Sector New York has worked very hard to improve its processes, cultivate its partnerships and learn how to apply new technology and personnel in new ways as we move forward to keep our port safe and secure. I'd like to share with you a few examples of our success with port partners who I am proud to work with both in times of great need and everyday Sector New York has:

- Conducted continuous MARSEC II Operations when the Iraq war began in 2003. As a result there were no terrorist incidents or disruption to war/security efforts in the port. During this time we conducted routine, daily interactions with multiple law enforcement and intelligence agency sources which became the first major integration by the FIST.
- Held additional MARSEC II Operations for heightened security posture during the 2003 and 2004 holiday season. The CIA reported that an incident was prevented due to overt LE presence of joint agencies. We found that the FIST/JTTF linkage was crucial to validating operational strategies & tactics.
- Coordinated successful, multi-agency response at the state, local and federal levels for VIP Yacht threat in July 2005. Due to these joint efforts, planned commercial activities were permitted to continue despite the real threat without incident. These operations were developed as part of the AMSC Operations sub-committee membership and coordination.

- Provided security and response assets to the Republican National Convention (RNC), held in August of 2004. Six months of planning prior to the convention took place with multiple states, local and federal agencies. This included the standing up of several multi-agency command posts and intelligence centers as well as supporting the Multi Agency Coordination Center at Madison Square Garden. A consolidated daily intelligence summary of all threats & incidents relevant to the RNC was developed and exchanged with all stakeholders.
- Strategically focused MARSEC II efforts from July 2004 thru Jan 2005. Our men and women responded to a combination of events and threats culled from multi-agency informational processes for a seven month period which encompassed not only the Convention, validated threats to New York, New Jersey financial districts, the Macy's 4th of July Fireworks, the third 9/11 anniversary, a UN General Assembly and our country's elections. This period included a heightened security need over the November to end of year holiday as well as the New Year's presidential inauguration in 2005. This was followed by the Iraqi elections that same month. I'm proud to say there were no major incidents throughout that period.
- Responded to a call for focused MARSEC II during July and August of 2005 after the tragic London Bombings. Concerned about threats to our own mass transit systems, and working with our partners, we maintained a presence aboard maritime mass transit which includes passenger ferries. This was an opportunity to utilize Hudson County's new Rapid Deployment Force (a result of Urban Area Security Initiative grant money and joint training initiative with Coast Guard and local law enforcement agencies) in providing substantial and overt law enforcement presence aboard commuter ferries, (approximately 1,000 daily transits).
- During the 60th Anniversary of the United Nations General Assembly, worked with port partners to secure the maritime environment for over 171 Heads of State – the most ever in one location. Again, this went off without incident.

Mr. Chairman, the efforts and contributions of this very committee played a significant role in all those noteworthy achievements. For our entire military, civilian and volunteer Auxiliary team, we thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.